

THOMAS COOK

By Mike Burrows

Born at Melbourne, Derbyshire on 22nd November 1808, Thomas Cook took his first step towards a world-wide travel organisation when, at the age of 33, he chartered a special train to take 570 people from Leicester to attend a temperance meeting at Loughborough. The charge for the round trip of 24 miles was 1/-, and taking place on 5th July 1841 it was the first privately organised public railway excursion. From this modest beginning Cook's travel agency grew until in 1851, no less than 165,000 visitors to the Great Exhibition had availed themselves of the advantages offered by Thomas Cook.

The Paris Exhibition in 1855 saw Thomas Cook turning his attention to the Continent, organising circular tours which were to develop into the coupon system, eventually to become the well known "International Travel Tickets".

Headquarters were transferred from Leicester to 98, Fleet Street London, in 1865, when John Mason Cook, the son, was placed in charge,

At the height of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, Thomas Cook was assisting in the relief of the starving Parisians. In the same year John was appointed by the Khedive as Agent of the Egyptian Government for passenger traffic on the Nile. During the Expedition in 1884, for the relief of General Gordon, at Khartoum, Cooks transported over 18,000 troops and 130,000 tons of war materials and supplies up the Nile.

A central office was established in Ludgate Circus, London in 1872, and six years later Thomas Cook decided to retire. He lived in retirement until 1878 when he died at the age of 84. By 1897 offices were to be found in Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Belfast and Dublin. John died in 1899 and his sons ran the business until 1924.

On 12th June 1924 a private limited company was formed, Thomas Cook & Son Ltd., to take over most of the old concern's various interests. At the same time, the banking aspect was to be looked after by a separate limited company, Thomas Cook & Son (Bankers) Ltd. F.H. Cook, a grandson of the founder, was appointed Chairman of both Companies. A position he held until his retirement in 1929.

The location of the central office changed in 1925 to Berkley Street, the completed offices opening on 12th April 1926. World-wide expansion had seen the need for offices to be opened in the following countries,

India	:	Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi (Banking)
Burma	:	Rangoon
Canada	:	Montreal
Ceylon	:	Colombo (Banking)
Straits	:	Singapore (Agents & Banking)
Hong Kong	:	Victoria
S. Africa	:	Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg.
France	:	Paris
Egypt	:	Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said.

And many of these offices used perfins.